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ABSTRACT

Responding to the crisis in leadership at community colleges, scholars and practitioners alike have called for a new style of leadership capable of adapting and responding easily to an uncertain political and social climate. Although community colleges are rooted historically in a hierarchical leadership mode, there seems to be broad consensus today that collective leadership is more effective. In specific cases, faculty at community colleges have identified hierarchical leadership structures at their institutions as ineffectual and in need of change. However, despite the fact that community college faculty are uniquely qualified for and desire leadership roles in a collective model, divisions between the faculty and the administration restrict their leadership potential. Initiating a participatory leadership model requires new approaches and involves various steps, including: (1) building trust in a collective model, and between the various constituencies represented in such a model; (2) developing methods for information sharing between faculty, administrators, boards of trustees; (3) forging dynamic interactions between the two coexisting lines of administration and decision-making (i.e., management and academic), enabling primary members of each to cross-participate; (4) preserving faculty development in the face of budget problems by providing resources to enhance professional growth in specific disciplines, general education and management; (5) utilizing technology in order to "create" time for faculty and administrators to engage in collective leadership efforts; and (6) instituting concrete systems of recognition and reward for faculty involvement. Includes 17 references. (JMC)

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"Faculty Leadership: A Dynamic, Potent Force For Comprehensive Institutional Development"

A Paper to "Leadership 2000"
The Third Annual Conference on Leadership Development
League of Innovation in the Community Colleges

July, 1991
Chicago, Illinois

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"FACULTY LEADERSHIP: A DYNAMIC, POTENT FORCE FOR COMPREHENSIVE INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT"

A PAPER TO "LEADERSHIP 2000"
THE THIRD ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
LEAGUE OF INNOVATION IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGES

JULY, 1991
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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I. INTRODUCTION

"As educational leaders, members of the faculty should be agressive advocates of excellence and innovation, both among their colleagues and in national forums".

"Faculty leaders should participate actively in governance and should be recognized for their work".

"Presidents cannot do the job alone".

"At too many community colleges we found a division between the faculty and administration".

"We urge each community college to commit itself to... the professional development of (top quality faculty)... An Innovative Teachers' Fund is recommended for every college, one that would give small grants to faculty members to improve teaching".

From "Building Communities: A Vision for a New Century", the Report of the Commission on the Future of Community Colleges, AACJC, Washington, D.C. 1988.

Community colleges face a formidable crisis and an exciting challenge. In dealing with this crisis, the political context in which they operate necessitates a comprehensive re-evaluation of mission, resources and leadership.

II. THE PAST AND PRESENT OF LEADERSHIP

In most literature regarding community colleges, leaderhip has been described as being in crisis. The political pressures and social climate already described lead scholars and practitioners to call for a new style

of leadership. One that can quickly and easily adjust and adapt.

There has been much discussion of the community college leader as a "builder" during the so-called golden age of growth and expansion of the community college movement between the fifties and the seventies.

This favorable growth climate called for leaders who could "get things done" quickly, effectively, and without the delay involved in consultation, consensus-seeking and collective decision making. That style of leadership that developed was labeled "hierarchical, authoritarian, and institutional." It should be noted here that in faculty surveys, this is the style of leadership respondents identified as the most common in community colleges even today.

A more subtle root for the hierarchical model of leadership at community colleges is their origin as components of unified school districts. Today, most community colleges in the country are independent taxing bodies, or components of state structures of higher education. However, at their inception, community colleges functioned under the same boards that operated elementary and secondary schools. They found their institutions under the stringent administrative control of these secondary and elementary schools and their teachers and regulated by policies that characterized American education during the 1950's and sixties. Community college teachers were controlled to the extent that their curricula and even their lesson plans were pre-defined and the methods of evaluating student achievement and even teachers themselves were prescribed.

This approach changed as professionalization of teachers increased, and they, either singly or in teacher organizations, asserted the scope of their expertise.

Understanding now the roots of the authoritarian, hierarchical mode of leadership, we come to appreciate that such a leadership style is inappropriate.

Today, the very concept of leadership has been separated from that of management: "Management is concerned with doing things right; leadership is concerned with doing the right things. Management takes place within the formal organization; leadership can and does occur everywhere." Everyone seems to accept, at least in principle, that a manager with no leadership ability is at best only a technician.

In defining the leadership that is needed today in, any structure or organization, whether it be a community college or other institution of higher education, the key words used are "participatory", "consultative" and, most poignantly, "servant" leadership.

There seems to be a consensus among scholars and practitioners that the most effective leadership is a collective leadership. Perhaps this is a re-discovering of the original meaning of the word "college". It comes from the Latin word "collegium", which means a gathering of scholars. Some may emphasize this collectivity as one to be consulted. Some may transfer specific decision-making responsibilities to it. For some, the leader becomes a broker, an executor of the collective decisions of the faculty. In summary, the leaders as servant -of customers, of student clients, of colleague teachers, of community.

While there are ethical implications to this approach to leadership, call for servant leadership as opposed to hierarchical or power leadership is not based on moral principles -- it is propounded from an inductive process that identifies the leadership style that "works", through an examination of successful enterprises, both academic and entrepreneurial.

III. THE CURRENT STRUCTURES AND CONTEXTS

In the context of participatory leadership, the forms of participation vary with the constituencies involved: at a mandatory level, participation of governing boards and top management of community colleges is an obvious example.

Participation may also occur in a limited way among managers or administrators. They may even include academic department heads, bringing into the process those incumbents whose positions are almost literally bridges between administration and faculty.

The role of faculty in participatory leadership is both traditional and embattled. Perhaps no other element in the community college structure is under so much pressure to function, let alone succeed.

Traditional leadership roles for faculty have been played in departments, and in consultative, governance committees. Governance committees that deal with academics and the instructional process are still the realm of faculty participation and even decision making. They are modeled to a large extent out of a University context, and exert considerable influence on curricula, requirements, exit and graduation regulations.

It is in the management committees -resource allocation, institutional planning, day-to-day management issues that faculty participation is less defined, and cannot be taken for granted.

Governance and management seem to come together as functions. Often management takes precedence, and then the term takes an exclusive labor-relations meaning. As such, it represents one role of the management-labor-dichotomy. Faculty then becomes labor, and at times labor only. Shared governance either disappears or weakens.

The issue of the relationship of collective bargaining and faculty participation in leadership is mentioned in most literature on the subject. In most cases, it is handled gingerly.

Some decry the labor/management polarization which is inherent to collective bargaining, and assume that such adversarial relationship seminally vitiates any real attempt at faculty participation in leadership.

Others suggest that as more and more community college faculty become unionized, a careful distinction must be established between labor issues (compensation, working conditions, etc.) and academic, governance issues (institutional leadership and effectiveness).

The difficulty with this is precisely in the definitions: where do working conditions constitute instructional issues? teacher assignments? teaching loads? teacher evaluations? faculty based student assessment v. independent, objective measurements?

There have been innovative approaches to the relationships between bargained for faculty and governance issues. In several school districts, newly negotiated contracts have started to define the teachers' role in curriculum and other instructional governance matters. In some, for instance, contract obstacles to innovative projects or initiatives are to be resolved through joint, standing committees. In others, standing academic and instructional committees are a part of the contract, with shared decision-making power. Perhaps this is the future of faculty participation in leadership.

In studying the role of bargained for faculty in shared leadership, two more observations are pertinent:

The labor contract sets clear definitions of responsibilities, working conditions and parties' behavior, as well as a structured conflict resolution

system. By doing so, it frees the parties from a host of decisions, from the petty to the personal. Time and energy thus released, can be used profitably for activities that foster leadership, vision and forward planning.

The scant literature on effective faculty leadership does show that labor union and governance committees do not replace each other. Mature institutions where shared governance systems operate well and where contract administration is smooth and conflict free, continue to operate under collective bargaining. Institutions where adversarial relationships are paramount, never had functioning governance bodies.

IV. THE NATURE OF LEADERSHIP AND ITS PRESENCE AMONG FACULTIES

While the need for, kind of, and context in which leadership can be examined, and one can identify the conditions and obstacles in which faculty leadership is likely to be exercised, a basic question must be asked: Is there capacity for and interest in leadership among community college faculty?

A rich definition of leadership identifies the following elements:

- the leader has a vision;
- the leader articulates this vision: makes it accessible and compelling, persuades others who buy into it;
- the leader elicits trust, through reliability and constancy;
- the leader shows a high knowledge of the self.

Not all four of these elements are easily quantifiable. It is true that community college faculty responding to surveys identify as urgent their need for professional development; it shows that as a group they have a high level of knowledge of the self, they have "an inherent capacity for growth" and a "desire for growth".

In specific cases, faculty at community colleges identify hierarchical structures as the current leadership mode in their institution, and express their desire for change.

As for a vision and ability to articulate this vision, the very mission of the community college faculty has to do with instilling a vision. At a recent meeting of selected community college leadership, the main point of agreement was the need to "collegiate" the student. Even

more than to teach skills and content, the concern was to create in the student the sense of college, the aspiration to, entrance into and acceptance of the culture of higher education, the fuller realization of the self that is the result of that level of education. When asked, faculty members express satisfaction with the results they see in their students.

This task of the faculty is not necessarily expressed in the syllabi, or even in the labor contract. It is the day-to-day assignment, working at the student level, being there, gaining a trust that cannot be taken for granted.

V. WHAT IT TAKES TO UNCHAIN FACULTY LEADERSHIP

In spite of the need for collective leadership, and the presence among faculty of ability and desire for leadership at the community college, it remains true that there is a "division between the faculty and administration". This division shackles the leadership potential of the faculty.

To unchain this potent force, a participatory leadership requires new approaches and various steps. Here are some of them:

A. Trust. "Trust is a risk game: the leader must ante first". The word calls for very little explanation: it is attitudinal as well as organizational. It is personal and also functional.

The initial step in trust is subjective, almost emotional: the ability of the administration to "let go" of power-leadership modes, and consciously move into participatory, "servant leadership".

Once assumed, this step must be structured, built into the organization: one of the assets of community college faculty is their talents apart from and in addition to their own discipline; those talents can be utilized in governance.

Trust, to be most effective, needs to be specific, not just generic. Leadership must trust individuals, through both formal and informal, structured and personal participation opportunities.

Traditionally, not every member of the faculty has participated equally nor consistently in governance. Scholars talk about the researching, the teaching faculty, and the "political" faculty, and assess

different levels of participation to each group., Similarly, the pressure of tasks, research, other commitments vary within the individual at different times. Trust identifies and utilizes those faculty members at those times when they can be more effective, not waiting for an unrealizable optimum of general participation.

Functionally, trust implies patience. Collective leadership processes are of necessity slower than hierarchical, power-based decisions. They also are more complex: at the end, decisions may not be the ones the administration "knew" were best. Trust implies believing that those processes are more effective in the long run: they may be the only ones effective for the issue.

B. Information Sharing:

Not for often repeated is the saying less true: information is power. Faculty are basically intellectual types: they thrive on information.

Sharing information is risky to the administrator-/leader: justifying unilateral decisions is much harder the more information is available and out in the open.

A more complex issue is the mode of information dissemination. Faculty at community colleges are characteristically overextended: four or five courses -12 to 15 credit hours per term, with comparatively larger classes, and with teacher-intensive approaches, make it harder for faculty members to participate, and even to assimilate information.

Technical details on how to convey information may include selective sharing; summarizing and briefing; general communications, newsletters, memos; easy access to original documents; various levels and types of meetings, and even PA announcements.

The essence is that faculty members cannot find out about a board decision limiting resources through the papers, rather than internally; or have accreditation or evaluation reports come to them neatly completed or already submitted; or meet new faculty or administrator faces in the hallways without notice or introduction.

C. Traditional analysis of structural organization in academic institutions has defined two co-existing lines of administration and decision making:

management and academic, and has assigned primary responsibilities for each of them to faculty and administration respectively.

In a participatory leadership mode, the two areas of lines of authority may remain -they may be necessary; the secret is to dynamically make them interact and their primary actors cross-participate in them.

Authority on academic issues, traditionally resting on the faculty, must be restored to them. At present, community colleges in many cases must report to and seek permission from state or local coordinating boards for new curricula, new courses and competency evaluation standards. Even when the process is carried out to a successful conclusion, it is slow and has a chilling effect on new academic and instructional initiatives.

Restoring the instructional authority of the faculty may mean, paradoxically, that administration will involve itself actively in academic issues: this involvement raises their value, and puts the administrative "clout" behind the faculty-initiated issues.

Conversely, "non-instructional" issues of management, primarily the realm of administration, benefit from faculty involvement: first, because faculty will bring to the discussion the immediate impact of the issue on students; second, because faculty will offer both an intelligent and separate -not disinterested- approach to the discussion; and finally, because they constitute the basic constituency that can gain consensus across all elements of the college, from board members to students.

D. Professional development is identified by faculty members as an area in need for improvement, and recognized by scholars and practitioners alike.

For full participation in leadership, this professional development must include specific discipline learning, and also general educational and management issues. It is interesting to note that many faculty contracts include in-service and line-advancement opportunities and rewards. In many cases, the experience is that faculty members work on academic management courses as well as degrees, almost at the same rate that they seek terminal degrees in their discipline.

Professional development is directly related to expenditures, and it is a line that often falls victim to budget constraints. Suggestions have been made to create a specific professional development fund, as a percentage of expenditures, either personnel or others. The degree to which this item is preserved in the face of budget problems is a telling indicator of the commitment of administration to participatory leadership.

E. Professional development is closely related to professional initiative. Faculty need a financial opportunity to experiment, to try new approaches, to launch experiments. Provision of resources for such undertakings again provides a yardstick to measure management commitment to faculty participation.

F. Lack of time by faculty and administration is a reality of life in the community college. To elicit faculty participation requires freeing faculty time.

Community colleges can take a revolutionary approach at "creating" time: utilization of technology on a much larger scale for the educational process.

Much of the teaching at the community college level deals with work on educational foundations; it requires drill and repetition. It also means teacher time in basic, repetitive, mechanical tasks. Computing systems are well suited for those tasks, some will say even better suited than humans.

Increased utilization of servant and facilitating technology is a necessity in freeing faculty for participatory leadership. Technology also will allow the same faculty to increase student contact, student advising, improved skills acquisition, and student tracking.

While at one time computers required standardization and accommodation of tasks and processes to the machine, modern systems technologies allow for personalization for individual attention and impact.

G. Finally, spearheading faculty participation in leadership must be accompanied with recognition and reward. There must be a system of compensation for leadership time and performance. It may come in the form of release time for task,

of public recognition, of special professional development opportunities and definitely, within collective bargaining constraints, in monetary incentives.

VI. THE GOAL: CONSULTATIVE OR DECISION-MAKING

Participatory leadership is the way of the future, but it is not to be taken for granted. It is necessary, but only if the institution is to succeed to its highest potential.

Faculty participation in such a leadership is necessary, it is possible, it needs to be fostered, nurtured, brought to fruition.

At the end, the question is whether we consult with faculty, or whether we believe we are representatives of that faculty, implementing their interests, which is the interest in teaching, the interest of students, the success of an institution that is nothing if not educational.

HDF/sj

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